

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield Traveling Trunk Program

We at Wilson's Creek are pleased to offer a Traveling Trunk program that focuses on the participants in the second major battle of the Civil War. Not only were both armies ill prepared for battle, but the inclusion of a predominately civilian volunteer militia, and, the involvement of the civilian population of the Wilson Creek area made this a unique battle for the time.

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield has five (5) traveling educational trunks available for use in the classroom. Four (4) of these deal with the military aspect of the Park, the other deals with the civilian population at the time of the battle. There is no charge for use of the trunks. However, teachers must call ahead to reserve a trunk as well as pick up and return it to the battlefield. Reservations can be made by calling (417) 732-2662 ext. 227. The size of each trunk is 24" w x 32" l x 22" h and each one weighs appr. 50 lbs.

Current trunks:

Civilians at Wilson's Creek

1st Iowa Infantry (Federal)

U.S. Regular (Federal)

3rd Louisiana Infantry (Confederate)

Missouri State Guard (Confederate)



Photo courtesy of Dan DuLany

These trunks can be used in a variety of ways to expand and enhance the study of the Battle of Wilson's Creek. They can be used for pre-visit activities so that students have an idea of what they will learn at the battlefield. Items in the trunks are hands-on and may be used in an appropriate manner, which might be dressing a student in the clothing, then describing other items and their uses as they are taken from the trunk. Post-visit use as a reinforcement or evaluation tool might include asking students to explain what different items in the trunk were used for in a written assignment or as an oral presentation.

Civilians at Wilson's Creek

This trunk focuses on the lives of those who lived in the area at the time of the battle in 1861. In addition to information about some of the local families, it also includes information about the style of everyday dress, children's games and various everyday household items that would have been on a working farm.

1st Iowa Infantry - Union

The 1st Iowa was formed shortly after the firing on Ft. Sumter in April, 1861. The unit was known as the Governor's Grays and included men from the German states, Ireland, England, Sweden, France and other European countries who had settled in the farm lands of Iowa. They joined General Nathaniel Lyon in Booneville, then forced marched to Springfield where they would distinguish themselves at the Battle of Wilson's Creek. It is important to note that their uniforms were gray although they were Union soldiers.

US Regular - Union

The United States Regular Army was composed of soldiers who in many cases were career soldiers and who had enlisted for at least 5 years. Many had served during the Mexican War. Most had been stationed at army posts in Indian Territory, Kansas and Nebraska. These soldiers were highly disciplined and trained distinguishing themselves in battle and sustaining heavy casualties. Many of these soldiers would go on to fight in other battles of during the Civil War.

3rd Louisiana Infantry - Confederate

The 3rd Louisiana like the 1st Iowa was a melting pot of men from many different countries. They had rushed to join up as soon as Louisiana seceded from the Union in January, 1861. They trained in New Orleans until May 20, 1861 when they marched to join General Ben McCulloch in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. In late July the Confederate army and the Missouri State Guard joined forces and on August 6, went into camp on the banks of Wilson's Creek where they would do battle with the Federal force on August 10. That morning they were mistaken for the 1st Iowa causing confusion which led the Federal forces under Colonel Franz Sigel to retreat.

Missouri State Guard - Confederate

The Missouri State Guard was formed basically to protect the State of Missouri from invasion from both sides. Most had been loyal to the Union and wanted both sides to leave them alone. They were formed under the leadership of former Missouri Governor, General Sterling Price, "Old Pap". Price's troops consisted of farm men and boys who would have worn civilian clothes, often were equipped with old muskets or hunting rifles, or more commonly, only hunting knives and frequently very little food. The State Guard fought well and suffered many casualties at Wilson's Creek. The State Guard fought well and suffered many casualties at Wilson's Creek. They would continue on with Price for the rest of 1861 and most of 1862 and eventually join with the Confederate Army.